

great many people who helped make such a beautiful remembrance possible: to the staff of the Architect of the Capitol, all the offices under the Sergeant at Arms, the Secretary of the Senate and her team, and the Press Gallery; to the volunteers from my own staff and from other congressional offices who freely gave their time; to the staff of the Capitol Visitor Center who ensured that tens of thousands of people could share this experience; to the men and women of the Capitol Police who watch over us all; to the U.S. military, the envy of the world. Special thanks to Stef Muchow, my director of operations, who played such a tireless role in conducting this orchestra, going back through the entire weekend leading up to Monday, and to so many others who worked through the weekend and around the clock to help the legislative branch coordinate a dignified sendoff befitting this remarkable man whom we honor. I thank you, and the Nation thanks you.

NOMINATIONS OF BERNARD L. MCNAMEE AND KATHLEEN LAURA KRANINGER

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on an entirely different matter, the Senate voted yesterday to advance the nomination of Bernard McNamee to serve on the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. Today, we will vote on his confirmation. I encourage every one of my colleagues to join me in supporting this abundantly well-qualified nominee.

After Mr. McNamee, we will continue moving ahead with the personnel business. We will vote on the confirmation of Kathleen Kraninger to lead the Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection. Ms. Kraninger brings a wealth of experience to an Agency in need of a renewed, consumer-focused mission. I urge each of my colleagues to join me in voting to get her started in this important work.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on another matter, for 8 years, President Obama landed blow after blow in his War on Coal. As we all know, it wasn't just the coal companies that endured the pain; hard-working families—many who live in economically distressed communities that relied on mining jobs—became the casualties of this ideological agenda. In my State of Kentucky, for example, those policies inflicted serious damage that is still being felt years later.

That is why I was so grateful to hear that later today, the Trump administration will begin the process to undo and replace another Obama anti-coal regulation. Throughout the Obama administration, my Republican colleagues and I did everything we could to stop this assault on vulnerable communities. Where this particular rule is

concerned, I personally led the charge, including as the lead sponsor of a resolution to cancel it altogether.

Republicans knew these policies would stymie American competitiveness and do little to actually help the environment. Despite our best efforts, President Obama's EPA worked overtime to shutter existing coal plants and, with this rule in particular, stop new ones from being built. It was the fulfillment of one of his most troubling campaign promises, which many of us in coal country remember very well. Here is what he said:

If somebody wants to build a coal-fired power plant, they can. It's just that it will bankrupt them.

When we blocked the legislation he originally pitched, President Obama chose to go it alone and try to implement aggressive regulations, often bending the rule of law in the process. When we used the tools available to us to bring relief to American families, we were met each time with vetoes. But everything changed when the American people elected President Trump. We have worked hand in hand to end the War on Coal and to bring relief.

Earlier this year, the President unveiled his plan to dismantle the so-called Clean Power Plan, a policy designed to shut down nearly every active coal plant. Now President Trump's EPA is also targeting another regulation that would have made it nearly impossible to build any new plants in the future. This is a crucial step toward undoing the damage and putting coal back on a level playing field.

On behalf of coal families throughout Kentucky, I applaud the Trump administration. This runaway regulation needs to be rolled back and replaced with a more reasonable and achievable set of standards. Coal deserves a level playing field, and that is what this White House is trying to accomplish. I look forward to reviewing the proposal in the coming days and continuing to work with President Trump on this critical issue.

TRIBUTE TO BOB CORKER

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, this is that time at the end of a Congress when inevitably some of our Members go on to something else and leave this body. I want to take this opportunity this morning to pay tribute to another distinguished Member of the Senate who is leaving us at the end of this year.

Senator BOB CORKER is one of the most hard-working and, frankly, relentless Members of this body. He is a builder by trade and a fixer by nature. Senator CORKER is always a man on a mission. Our distinguished colleague hails from a State with a long history of impressive Senators. Tennesseans such as Howard Baker, Al Gore, Bill Frist, and, of course, our colleague LAMAR ALEXANDER all developed national reputations as leaders. But after 12 years of working with Bob, I could

not feel more comfortable saying that he himself will now become a part of that great Tennessee legacy. He has met that high bar, and he set it high himself.

No sooner could any Senator turn his or her attention to some important but stalled initiative—some dead-end negotiation, some thorny national problem—then you would see BOB CORKER diving into the fray and attacking the problem with everything he had.

The limitless work ethic, the entrepreneurial drive—these things have defined BOB CORKER since long before he was sworn in as a Senator. He started working odd jobs at age 13. At 25, he had saved up enough money to cofound his own construction company—25 years old—and strike out for himself. That firm grew from an \$8,000 lark into a major operation that spanned more than a dozen States.

Bob was a natural. He was constantly sniffing out opportunities and tackling them with vigor. Along the way, he picked up what some close to him now joke is an addiction to the feeling of a closing handshake—that sign that needs were met, a deal was done, and both parties would walk away happy.

The term “workaholic” might be putting it mildly. I am told that after one particularly hairy negotiation ended in success, Bob exclaimed, “I'd sell it back to him—if I could turn around and buy it again!”

Unlike many of his colleagues, Bob did not necessarily always aspire to public service.

In fact, it took a direct appeal to his builder's instincts to set this political career in motion.

Bob saw a message in a church bulletin. They needed volunteers with construction experience to help a mission in Haiti. Bob went along, along with his father, and he came back with the drive to keep doing real good for real people.

That conviction eventually took him to city hall in Chattanooga, where people still talk about the transformative wave of education reform, economic development, and public improvements that was unleashed during his time as mayor.

Tennesseans liked what they saw. They decided the next chapters of BOB CORKER's serial success story should be written right here on their behalf in the U.S. Senate.

So if I even tried to relate a comprehensive catalog of everything BOB CORKER has gotten accomplished in the Senate, this speech would be our last act of business before New Year's, but a few highlights stand out especially.

It was early in Senator CORKER's first term when the financial crisis threw our economy into chaos, but this fired-up freshman immediately started working with committee chairs and new friends across the aisle. He became a pivotal player, putting his private sector acumen to great use in helping craft policies to begin restoring stability.

He has been a leading voice on housing reform, of course, and the combination of his background with his post on the Foreign Relations Committee has led to some unique BOB CORKER accomplishments. Just this year, he has been hard at work on the BUILD Act to overhaul how America makes loans to new projects in the developing world.

He was also a key champion of the electrify Africa bill that became law in 2016, laying groundwork for a more stable power grid across that continent.

There are also other subtler ways he has remained the consummate businessman. Tennesseans know that many of the good things their junior Senator has achieved for his home State didn't even involve legislation. Every bit the former mayor, BOB has continued to hustle to convince every new job and new investment in sight why his home State is the place for them—phone call by phone call, meeting by meeting.

So the Senate is preparing to say goodbye to one of our most energetic and accomplished Members. We will miss his enthusiasm and his expertise, but we will also miss his famous generosity and the great kindness everyone close to BOB jumps at the chance to describe.

He is thoughtful to those he knows well and to those he has just met. I have it on good authority that on at least one occasion, BOB met a promising young man working in a checkout line and signed him up right there on the spot for a job interview with his chief of staff.

Most recently, we know BOB CORKER as the brilliant chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee. He has traveled constantly. He has engaged issues around the world with an enormous degree of skill and capacity. He is a powerful voice for American interests and those of our allies and a forceful, influential thorn in the side of those who might wish us harm.

He has also used that position to champion vulnerable people around the world. His spearheading of the End Modern Slavery Initiative Act, focusing resources and attention on a humanitarian crisis affecting literally millions, will be a core piece of that legacy.

I know BOB prides himself on bringing more regular order back to the committee and getting it back to basics—legislation, treaties. Under his leadership, the committee passed the first authorization bill for the State Department—listen to this—in 14 years.

Predictably, that BOB CORKER work ethic is on full display when he is traveling the world on our Nation's behalf. I hear that when BOB was leading a trip to Israel and Palestine a few years ago, he heard about smuggling tunnels between Egypt and Gaza and decided to go see them himself.

So the way I heard it, he arranged for ground transportation to Gaza, examined the system, and was back in Tel Aviv later that day to discuss the situation with Prime Minister Netanyahu.

I will admit, though, that I am plenty excited to see what this hugely accomplished individual will get into next, and there is plenty of talk about what mission is next in the queue.

I have heard his name is in the hat for an opportunity envied by many in this Chamber, and that is the chance to spend a lot more time with family. I am sure Elizabeth and the family will oblige with a smooth confirmation process.

I have to admit, whatever comes next, I really doubt we will be able to call it a retirement in any ordinary sense of the word. You see, I have heard what happens when BOB CORKER tries to relax.

Apparently, there was one summer when he endeavored to take up water-skiing. You know—nice, lazy days; soak in the sunshine. Well, that didn't last very long. BOB went all in. He practiced and practiced and kept at it all summer, and soon he was a masterful but somewhat exhausted and burned-out water-skier. Once the challenge was gone, on to the next thing, on to the next deal, on to the next construction project.

So, BOB, we will miss you a lot. The Senate and the great State of Tennessee will miss your service, but we just simply can't wait to see what you build next.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as if in morning business.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO BOB CORKER

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, let me begin where the majority leader stopped.

It is a true story about the tunnels. Senator CORKER was curious about smuggling supplies from Egypt to Gaza. Others of us might have asked somebody about that—not BOB CORKER. He hailed a Jeep, rode to the border, inspected the tunnels, took photographs, and as the majority leader said, when he met with Benjamin Netanyahu that afternoon, showed him the photographs. Netanyahu was startled. The Prime Minister of Israel might have been surprised by BOB CORKER's conduct, but none of us who knew BOB CORKER were surprised.

As Senator MCCONNELL said, BOB CORKER is always a man on a mission, with little regard for the obstacles in the way.

In 1978, age 25, he had saved about \$6,000, and he started a construction company. A friend of mine in Maryville, my hometown, worked for him as he built a shopping center in Blount County. My friend said: I always knew that that CORKER was going to amount to something.

After his experience in Haiti that Senator MCCONNELL discussed, he also

began to apply his skills of construction to help find decent homes for nearly 10,000 people in Chattanooga.

I met BOB CORKER 25 years ago. It was 1993. His friend Jimmy Haslam, who was his roommate at the University of Tennessee, called me and said he had this friend who was thinking about public service, and he wondered if I would talk to him. Jimmy Haslam is today the owner of the Cleveland Browns. When they first knew each other, I believe, according to CORKER, they spent a lot of their time sitting on the roof of the fraternity house at the University of Tennessee drinking beer.

Nevertheless, BOB CORKER and I walked up and down the beach at Hilton Head, SC, for what must have been an hour and a half. In his typical BOB CORKER way, he was weighing both sides—all sides—of the issue. Should I run for the U.S. Senate? Should I run for Governor of Tennessee—which might be better suited to somebody with his executive background.

He ran for the U.S. Senate in 1994, which would have been a very good year for a Republican to do that, with one exception. He had a primary, and he was defeated by Bill Frist, a doctor who had never before been involved in politics. Some people said it really amounted to Frist—for these two rookies who were running against each other in a primary—Frist just spent more of his money to beat CORKER than CORKER spent of his to beat Frist. In any event, Frist came here and even served as the majority leader of the U.S. Senate.

Of course, that didn't slow BOB down more than about 10 minutes. The new Governor of Tennessee, Don Sundquist, invited him to become, in effect, the chief operating officer of our State government.

There, we saw the first indications of diplomacy that we now see today in his work around the world. He began to work with the Democratic mayor of Nashville, whom Governor Sundquist had just defeated in the Governor's race, and together they brought the Titans to Nashville and to Tennessee—which, by the way, play the Jaguars tonight at 7:20.

BOB earned so much respect from the Democratic legislature that existed then that they tried to persuade him to run for Governor as a Democrat, but he said no, and he returned to Chattanooga and jumped back into business. Real estate companies were what he became involved in, and then he became the mayor of Chattanooga in 2000.

Now, he would be the first to tell you that Chattanooga was already on a roll, that a lot of people had a lot to do with Chattanooga's success, but everybody else will tell you he was the best, fastest runner to have on the last stage of the relay team because he took what was already beginning to happen in Chattanooga and put it into high gear, lay the groundwork for what eventually attracted Volkswagen to put its